

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 310 023

SO 020 099

TITLE German Culture Today--Bridges between the Avant-Garde and the Public. An Inter Nationes Forum (Bonn, West Germany, November 26, 1987).

INSTITUTION Inter Nationes, Bonn (West Germany).

PUB DATE 88

NOTE 70p.

PUB TYPE Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Artists; Cultural Activities; Cultural Context; Cultural Opportunities; Culture; Federal Aid; Fine Arts; Foreign Countries; *Government Role; *Popular Culture; Public Policy; *Public Support; Sculpture; *Social Environment; State Aid; Theater Arts; Visual Arts

IDENTIFIERS *Avant Garde; *West Germany

ABSTRACT

The interplay between government and artists and between politics and culture, especially as it relates to the avant-garde and the public, is the topic of this Inter Nationes forum, held jointly with the Center for Journalistic Studies at the University of Giessen and the Federal Mission of Rhineland-Palatinate. As Dr. Bernhard Vogel, president of the Bundesrat and minister-president of the Rhineland-Palatinate illustrates in "Government Promotion of the Arts: Aiming for a Broad Impact or Focusing on the Avant-Garde?" the states' (Laender) and local authorities account for over 90 percent of the spending on cultural matters, and this local autonomy helps to promote a wealth and diversity of German culture. The government must not move too slowly or be afraid to support the avant-garde. In the next paper, "Bridges or a Gap between the Avant-Garde and the Public?" Dr. Ulla Hahn discusses the nature of the avant-garde and its relationship to mainstream art and the general public. This is followed by a presentation entitled "Visual Arts in Public Places: Creating Space, instead of Occupying It," in which Kasper Konig investigates the visual and public dialog that develops when art objects are placed in the public domain. The final paper is called "Schiller, c'est moi: Elitist Theatre at the Tax Payers' Expense?"; in it, Gunther Beelitz reviews the difficulties encountered in the choice and staging of avant-garde or classic plays, and the role of public funding for theater. A summary of the forum discussion period concerning these issues follows. Three songs written by Kristin Horn and performed during the forum are included. (PPB)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED310023

50020099

Bridges
between the
Aunt Garde
and the
Public

An Inter-Nationes
Forum

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

K. STAHL

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

This event was sponsored by the Government
of the State of Rhineland-Palatinate and
the Südwestfunk Broadcasting Corporation.

German Culture Today –

Bridges
between the
Avant-Garde
and the
Public

An Inter Nations
Forum

✓
Inter Nations Bonn 1988

© Inter Nationes Bonn 1988

Layout: Stefan Röhl

Printed in the Federal Republic of Germany
by Siering KG, Bonn

Preface	6
<i>Proceedings of the Forum</i>	
Kristin Horn, Chanson "Die Macht"	5
Dr Dieter W. Benecke, Chairman of Inter Nationes Welcome	9
Dr Bernhard Vogel, President of the Bundesrat and Minister-President of Rhineland-Palatinate "Government Promotion of the Arts – Aiming for a Broad Impact or Focusing on the Avant-Garde?"	13
Kristin Horn, Chanson "So singt der Afrikaner"	22
Dr Ulla Hahn, Introduction to the Panel Discussion "Bridges or a Gap Between the Avant-Garde and the Public?"	25
Kasper König, Professor of Visual Arts "Visual Arts in Public Places – Creating Space, instead of Occupying it"	30
Günther Beelitz, Theatre Manager "Schiller, c'est moi – Elitist Theatre at the Tax-Payer's Expense?"	39
Discussion	55
Kristin Horn, Chanson "Ein gutes Lied . . ."	69

Chanson by Kristin Horn "Die Macht"

Wer geht im Kreml ein und aus
und residiert im Weißen Haus,
die Macht.

Wer hat in jedem Land der Welt
sich einen Popanz aufgestellt,
die Macht.

Wer macht vor überhaupt nichts halt
und bläht sich auf, bis daß es knallt,
die Macht, die Macht.

Wer teilt das schlichte Volksgefühl
und sagt der Masse, was sie will,
die Macht.

Wer trifft den Ton von jedermann
und stimmt die großen Hymnen an,
die Macht.

Wer hat an Worten viel Verschleiß
und redet nur den größten Scheiß,
die Macht, die Macht.

Wer schwört, er bringt den Notstand weg
und zieht die Karre aus dem Dreck,
die Macht.

Wer nennt beim Namen Türk und Jud
und macht den Schaden wieder gut,
die Macht.

Wer kriegt sogar noch applaudiert
für jeden Furz, der ihm passiert,
die Macht, die Macht.

Wer braucht die Funktionäre sehr
und mehr und mehr das Militär,
die Macht.

Wer hat an Kriechern nie genug,
an Denunzianten, Lug und Trug,
die Macht.

Wer bläst dem kleinen Mann den Marsch
und kriecht den Reichen in den Arsch,
die Macht, die Macht.

Preface

On 26 November 1987 Inter Nationes, assisted by the Federal Mission of Rhineland-Palatinate and the Centre for Journalistic Studies at the University of Giessen, held a forum on "German culture today – bridges between the avant-garde and the public". The participants were: Dr Bernhard Vogel, President of the Bundesrat and Minister-President of Rhineland-Palatinate, Dr Ulla Hahn, author, Kasper König, professor of visual arts, Günther Beelitz, theatre manager, and Kristin Horn, singer-songwriter.

Events of this kind no doubt contribute to cultural debate within the Federal Republic of Germany. However, Inter Nationes' main intention in publishing the speeches and discussions is to give foreigners an impression of the diversity of German cultural life. This aspect of cultural policy thrives on the country's federal structure, which facilitates cultural variety or even makes it possible in the first place. Each of the eleven constituent states, the *Laender*, seeks to establish specific cultural accents, some of which are linked to local traditions and thus differ greatly, while others are modern and therefore not so regionally distinctive but nonetheless competitive. This makes it difficult for many foreigners who try to find a single German culture, but it also enriches cultural relations because due to the wide-ranging stimuli a large number of potential partners abroad can be addressed. Thus the path is paved for mutual understanding and hence for better political relations, too.

The interplay of culture and politics was a key topic of the forum. At the award of the Goethe Medals in Munich last year, President Richard von Weizsäcker stated on this subject: "Culture is not devoid of politics. Culture is not the Garden of Eden for intellectual and artistic elites. Culture is man's way of living. It is the substance around which politics must revolve." Culture concerns everyone and exists for everybody. The government bears responsibility for creating favourable conditions for culture, it ensures free development of the arts and

artists as well as free access to artistic experience. At the same time the so-called avant-garde's scope for experimentation and alternative art forms must be widened because they, linked directly or indirectly to cultural traditions, prepare tomorrow's culture. Numerous foreigners living and working in the Federal Republic of Germany also contribute to this endeavour. They enrich cultural life, provide ideas for new styles of representation and encourage a cultural dialogue with their native country.

The arts do not stop at national borders. They are universal and unite nations. A formerly avant-garde movement like Expressionism, for example, spread throughout France, Germany and Scandinavia at the beginning of this century. Artists from a wide range of countries stimulated each other and continue to do so, while the public occupy themselves with art and artists from diverse countries. The government's task is to permit and facilitate this dialogue.

The forum "German culture today – bridges between the avant-garde and the public" furnished a host of ideas. The contributions show how many variations there are on the theme of "culture" and how important it is to discuss culture in general. Inter Nationes wishes to thank everyone who contributed to the forum as well as the Federal Mission of Rhineland-Palatinate for its financial support, which made possible the event and this publication.

Dr Dieter W. Benecke
Chairman, Inter Nationes



Participants in the Cultural Forum (from left to right): Dr. Dieter W. Benecke, Günther Beelitz, Minister-President Dr. Bernhard Vogel, Dr. Ulla Hahn, Prof. Kasper König
Photo: Danetzki

Welcome by Dr Dieter W. Benecke, Chairman of Inter Nationes

On hearing Kristin Horn's chanson, some of you may have been reminded of the saying "A political song is a nasty song"¹. In his inaugural speech as President of the Bundesrat, Dr Vogel rejected ideas of the kind expressed by Kristin Horn in her chanson. Everyone who possesses power is exposed to criticism. This applies not only to politicians; institutions, the media and artists themselves wield power and must accept criticism. Even if the style and substance of the criticism may be displeasing to whoever is affected, as a whole we can be very pleased about this freedom to criticize, and even the freedom to criticize criticism, which is at times somewhat more difficult. Let me quote President Richard von Weizsäcker, who wishes us success with our forum as well as forward-looking results; he regrets that he is unable to attend. On receiving the Guardini Award², he said: "We almost take freedom for granted. Yet it is both an immeasurably large gift and an immense duty incumbent on us."

Inter Nationes is committed to fulfilling this duty. I shall resist the temptation to illustrate this by listing our many activities. But I would like to point out that, in performing our duty of fostering understanding abroad for Germany, we are always on the look-out for "burning issues". To convey a discerning and credible picture of Germany abroad, one must constantly sound out at home what is worth presenting for a dialogue with other countries, bearing in mind what is in fact presentable there.

¹ "Politisch Lied, ein garstig Lied" ("a political song is a nasty song") from Goethe's "Faust, Part I" (Auerbach's Cellar) has become an oft-cited quotation

² Guardini Award. Named after the Catholic theologian Romano Guardini (1885-1968), conferred since 1970 by the Catholic Academy in Bavaria in recognition of outstanding activities by a Christian personality

"The avant-garde and the public" is, I feel, one of the most burning issues. There are growing signs of public discontent. I need only mention Fassbinder's¹ play "Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod" (Rubbish, the city and death), the "sculpture boulevard" in Berlin or the Essen Theatre Company's performance of "Faust" in Recklinghausen. Consequently, there is an increasing fear of censorship among artists in our country. What some regard as filth is considered a work of art by others. A recent example is the discussion about Beuys' "Lard corner"². None of this is new, it has been with us for over 2,000 years. Even the Romans said: "Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi." This remark has always been applicable to art and will probably remain so as it is not possible to gauge at what point an experiment can be termed art. This is fortunate, I feel, because otherwise the development of imagination and our ability to learn would be in a deplorable state.

There is an interesting point of contact between culture and politics when the government promotes the arts. The politician in a democracy seeks reelection by a majority, while the avant-garde do not, by their very nature, command majority support. Thus there is often a kind of "secret love" by politicians for artists, sometimes even by artists for politicians, partly because of genuine affection, partly because they need each other either for financial reasons or as a subject to attack. For those concerned this may be enjoyable or painful. The latter usually holds true of cultural organizations in the political field, such as Inter Nationes or the Goethe Institute. These institutions are mostly at the receiving end of criticism from both sides: from artists if they feel they are misunderstood and inadequately presented abroad, and from politicians if the publicly-funded presentation does not meet with their approval. It is at all events exciting to observe this rela-

¹ Rainer Werner Fassbinder. 1945-1982, German director and writer, "Berlin Alexanderplatz" (television series), "The Marriage of Maria Braun"

² Joseph Beuys. 1921-1986, politically committed action artist, 1961-1972 professor of sculpture at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, where he created a "Lard corner" for demonstration purposes during instruction. The room was subsequently unused for a while; cleaning ladies unknowingly removed the "Lard corner", which caused a stir among some disciples of Beuys



"Berlin", a bronze sculpture by Brigitte and Martin Matschinsky-Denninghoff as part of the "Sculpture Boulevard" on the Kurfürstendamm in West Berlin. It is intended to symbolize the situation of the divided city.

Photo: dpa

tionship between culture and politics and to convey abroad this interplay as an aspect of life in Germany. I am thus delighted that we – the Federal Mission of Rhineland-Palatinate, the Centre for Journalistic Studies at the University of Giessen and Inter Nationes – have succeeded in organizing this forum.



Dr Bernhard Vogel, Minister-President of the State of Rhineland-Palatinate
Photo: Danetzki

Dr Bernhard Vogel

**"Government Promotion of the Arts –
Aiming for a Broad Impact or Focusing on
the Avant-Garde?"**

I am pleased that Inter Nationes, the Centre for Journalistic Studies at the University of Giessen and the Federal Mission of Rhineland-Palatinate are holding this forum. I welcome the fact that Inter Nationes, whose task is to present German culture abroad, intends to reflect on our German culture. Familiarity with one's own cultural situation is the prerequisite for credibly presenting it abroad.

At this forum we will certainly not reach agreement on all points. For example, it will probably not come as a surprise to anyone that I do not subscribe to the interpretation of power expressed by Kristin Horn in her chanson. Instead I believe that power is necessary. The only critical aspect is the means by which it is obtained and subsequently defended. It is a good thing if politicians, artists and others talk to one another, if there are different points of view and if they can be voiced and debated. I gladly accepted the invitation to attend this forum because, in my opinion, our culture and hence its presentation abroad cannot be discussed without the participation of the Laender – you will not be surprised to hear this from me as President of the Bundesrat. I also say this in the presence of not only foreign, but also German ambassadors.

Under our constitution, the Laender enjoy autonomy in cultural affairs. Together with local authorities, they bear over 90 per cent of spending on cultural matters. Federalism, sovereignty and autonomy of the Laender are not just important general structural principles of our country; they have always shaped its cultural set-up to a decisive extent. I am convinced that they are major sources of the strength of German culture. The wealth and diversity of German culture afford a good basis for its interesting presentation abroad. They increase the

opportunities for a cultural dialogue with foreign partners. They might serve as a model for the emerging culture of a united Europe.

Freedom from and through the State

Let me first make a few remarks on government promotion of the arts. Heinrich Böll⁵ once said: "Anyone connected with art does not need the state; he needs a certain provincial administration for which he pays taxes, lamplighters who provide him with a little lighting when he walks home drunk, refuse collectors who relieve him of his waste." I do not share his view. I am basically in favour of government promotion of art and culture. Incidentally, most artists also expect this. Controversial is at most the question of who is entitled to support in a specific case, the manner in which it is granted, and the amount involved. However, one would completely ignore the sensitivity of this sector and the complexity of our constitutional law if one were to assume that federal, regional and local authorities can set about promoting the arts without further ado. Just as undisputed as the basic responsibility of the state are a number of recognized constraints: Promotion of the arts is governed by the system of constitutionally defined competences and by the political principle of subsidiarity between government and society.

Our federal constitution is very terse in this respect: "Art shall be free." This brief statement of only four words on freedom of art may initially give rise to doubt as to whether there is at all any scope for the government to perform any organizational function in this context. However, on the one hand, this sentence in article 5, para. 3, of the federal constitution does not exist on its own; on the other hand, it is

⁵ Heinrich Böll, 1917–1985, German writer (novels, satires, plays, short stories), awarded Nobel Prize for Literature in 1972, "The Clown", "The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum"

supplemented by detailed provisions in many Laender constitutions, which carry particular weight in view of the autonomy enjoyed by the Laender in cultural affairs. But judges and theorists specializing in constitutional law claim that even the terse provision in the federal constitution gives the government a clear mandate to participate in organizing the arts. To put it very simply, this is an interpretation of basic rights according to which the aim is not only to guarantee freedom from the state, but also – within certain limits – to permit freedom through the state, with the aid of the state.

The public duty to protect and cultivate art and culture is undisputed. It is equally undisputed that a democratic government must not regard itself as a censor and certainly not employ culture as an ideological tool. The path via the Ministry of Culture in the Third Reich led to cultural barrenness. Today we speak of government neutrality in cultural matters – a general concept that is no doubt readily accepted. But how can government neutrality in cultural affairs and government promotion of the arts be reconciled with one another? Ulrich Scheuner, an expert in constitutional law, rightly states: "The notion of government support that is evenly distributed in all directions and takes equal account of everyone is illusory. That kind of sponsorship could not be regarded as promotion of the arts, but as welfare assistance."

Government Promotion of the Arts

Artists understandably want to be independent of the state, but they also need and want support. As Hans Maier⁶ once put it: "Not too near to the government to become dependent, not too far away to miss out on any assistance. Like any balancing act, the artist's is naturally precarious, as is the government's".

⁶ Hans Maier. Born in 1931. 1970–1986 Bavarian Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs, since 1962 professor of political science at Munich University

But what are the selection criteria applied by the government, considering that the funds at its disposal are limited? The first problem encountered in government promotion of the arts is that of delimiting art itself. The modern state marked by cultural pluralism refrains from laying down certain requirements as regards content or – as Paul Mikat⁷, among others, stated – from establishing a specific cultural ideal. But is it possible in this context to accept the argument of Joseph Beuys that art starts with thinking itself, when the shapeless matter begins to be moulded into shape? Although thinking greatly deserves to be encouraged, more precise criteria are of course needed for government promotion of the arts. No matter how we look at it: In public sponsorship of the arts we cannot avoid applying the criterion of "quality". But what is quality, and above all who defines it?

Here a careful distinction must first be made between constitutionally guaranteed freedom of art and artists from government interference and their promotion by the government. Freedom of art and artists is, as a matter of principle, not subjected to any qualitative assessment, but the promotion of art and artists is – whether it be the granting of subsidies and tax relief, the awarding of prizes and ratings, or purchases, exhibitions and contracts. It is not only the purchase of a specific oeuvre or the support of an individual artist that requires public justification. Such legitimation is also needed for costly art exhibitions or for expensive theatrical productions seen by only a few thousand people in a season. These questions are at times asked very forcefully, with reference being made to, say, the want existing in the Third World. Answering these questions is not always as easy as asking them. But for a civilized country, promoting culture so that there are theatre and opera performances is a matter affecting its very identity. The Federal Republic of Germany is, of course, a country committed to social justice, but we also regard ourselves as a country with its own culture. In this context there can be different degrees of

⁷ Paul Mikat. Born in 1924, 1962–1966 Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs of North-Rhine/Westphalia, 1966–1969 member of NRW parliament, 1969–1987 CDU member of the Bundestag

emphasis in the allocation of funds, but in my view it cannot be a case of either one or the other.

Government responsibility for art and culture implies, in the first instance, creating favourable basic conditions under which art and artists can develop freely and under which everyone has access to the arts and the artists. Art is not the glass bead game of an alleged upper class, but is part of human life, a manifestation of human existence. In this increasingly uniform world it is particularly able to provide orientation. The favourable conditions must serve to stimulate private sponsorship of and attention to the arts. For this reason we advocated, for instance, that tax relief be granted on donations and that the position of private foundations be strengthened. I consider effective copyright in the cultural domain to be extremely important, but there are numerous other arrangements – including old-age assistance – that directly influence the living and working conditions of artists. Let me also mention the government's responsibility for education relating to culture – this ranges from defining credible terms of reference for schools to setting up academies and universities for young artistic talent. Good economic conditions also play a part. The cultural scene can live from "art consumption" by many hundreds of thousands of people. Yet despite the importance of private initiative, what would our cultural scene be like today without substantial funding by regional, local and federal authorities? Every year they spend about eight billion marks on art and culture in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Both Broad-Based and Top-Level Support

It goes without saying that most of this support benefits traditional and established forms of art and culture and thus has a broad impact. Yet this does not mean that those forms are accorded priority on the grounds that they are superior. I believe that broad-based support and support for the avant-garde do not preclude each other. They are mu-

tually complementary, just like broad-based support and top-level support, for example, not least because today's avant-garde may be tomorrow's cultural base.

Government support must in principle be available for all types of art; the government must not be selective in this respect, or else it will be interfering with content, thus violating the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of art. Naturally this also applies to alternative forms, to experimentation, from which art regenerates itself. Here, too, the only criterion must be that of quality; artists themselves, and not the government, must set the standards for such evaluation. But this is precisely the point at which our subject acquires a dramatic perspective in both theory and practice.

Joachim Kaiser⁸ once said: "When I'm abroad, I envy us, and when I'm here, I find it disturbing how few really good things we seem to achieve on the basis of so many splendid conditions and opportunities." Given the rich diversity of, say, our music, which we are justifiably proud of, Joachim Kaiser is right in one respect: Scarcely 10 per cent of the music performed by our orchestras are works by contemporary composers. This trend ought to make us stop and think. To be sure, Adorno⁹ was not the first to point out that the audience at classical concerts want to hear familiar and not unfamiliar music. What Walter Benjamin¹⁰ said with slightly different emphasis for other types of art is also borne out in the world of music: "The public like the new Chaplin, but not the new Picasso. The same public who react progressively to a grotesque film become the fustiest public you can imagine when confronted with Surrealism." On examining the programmes of some publicly subsidized concerts, I find that too often they are geared to an assumed public preference for the familiar.

⁸ Joachim Kaiser. Born in 1928, theatre and literature critic, since 1977 professor at the State Academy for Music and the Visual Arts, Stuttgart

⁹ Theodor Adorno. 1903–1969, professor of sociology, music critic, co-founder of the Frankfurt School, "Against Epistemology: A Metacritique", "Negative Dialectics"

¹⁰ Walter Benjamin. 1892–1940, writer, essayist, literature and social critic, committed suicide due to fear of being turned over to the Gestapo, "Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik"

Public subsidies in particular should encourage risk-taking and a willingness to try out new, unfamiliar works. Unfortunately we discover that in the list of the operas, operettas and ballets performed most frequently over the last 20 years, there have at most been changes of position. More courage is needed – courage that is found in, say, radio programmes of contemporary music. The radio corporations do not let themselves be dictated by audience ratings, which are all too readily made the yardstick of success, even though public corporations do not need this as they are funded differently than private radio stations not least because of their special function. Similarly, the booking rates of concert and theatre seats should not be the sole criterion for evaluating our orchestras and theatres. I fully concur with August Everding¹¹, who said: "Pursuing cultural policy means pursuing something new that you don't like yet, that you get to know through repeatedly hearing it." He was of course referring to cultural policy at home. When external cultural policy is involved, there are other criteria as well, such as respect for the host country's culture as well as consideration for the fact that our traditional cultural assets are just as much a source of interest as are our new cultural developments.

I feel there is a great cultural and educational task. It was important that the ministers of education and cultural affairs took the decision in 1985 to intensify the links between schools and cultural institutions by making schools more receptive to the arts and artists. Young people must not be denied the chance of experiencing art as part of life, and it certainly must not be ruined for them. Cézanne once stated: "Art is intended only for an extremely small number of people." He said that shortly before Marcel Duchamp¹² declared ordinary everyday items to be works of art, thus occupying a radical position on the frontier of art. Since then the frontiers of art have repeatedly been pushed further out. Today art does not just reflect our spiritual unity, but also our diversity or – to be more precise – our disunity. Minimal

¹¹ August Everding. Born in 1928, professor at the Munich Academy of Music, since 1982 manager of the Bavarian State Theatre

¹² Marcel Duchamp. 1887–1968, French painter, Dadaism

Art, Pop Art, Action Art and the rituals of Land Art mirror the shattering of things – but nothing new emerges.

If government promotion of the arts were confined to cultivating traditions, it would fail in its task of giving everyone access to art. Avant-garde, alternative forms of art reach those sections of the population not attracted by conventional art. One example of this are the "culture factories", whose unconventional forms naturally appeal above all to young people.

Quality and Early Promotion

Government promotion cannot exclude the avant-garde, nor is it intended to. In many cases it is government sponsorship that creates the conditions for experimentation and alternative art forms. It should not, however, anticipate the process in which the latest art develops, discovers itself, gains acceptance and becomes established. Here, I feel, there is a special task and opportunity for private patrons. They have the legitimation of their own personal preference, the possibility of acting swiftly and the opportunity of early detection. Though this may entail failure, it means being able to detect quality at an early stage.

The government must also, in my opinion, seize every opportunity to encourage and highlight quality. A much-used device for this purpose are art prizes. However, unless they are incentive prizes for young artists, they are usually awarded at a very late stage, frequently to artists who have already received many distinctions. Quite often one gets the impression that the prize is meant to honour the awarder more than the recipient. And, as Friedrich Dürrenmatt¹³ once said, the prize imposes on the recipient the burden of holding a thank-you speech. In this connection there should be new lines of emphasis. It is

¹³ Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Born in 1921, Swiss writer, "The Judge and His Hangman", "The Visit"

Government Promotion of Art and Culture

Artistic and cultural activities in the Federal Republic of Germany are supported with public funds exceeding DM 7 billion a year. Local authorities contribute the largest amount of 55–60%, the Länder 35–40%, and the federal government 2–3% (DM 430 million).

According to a study by the Institute for Economic Research (IFO), Munich, art and culture help to generate incomes with an annual amount of DM 40 billion. 680,000 people, i.e. 2.7% of the working population, are employed in this sector.

right to acknowledge the achievements of a successful artist, as we indeed do. But we should have the courage to risk awarding a prize 20 years earlier.

This courage is needed not only on the part of politicians, but above all by the experts who advise us. They usually determine the decisions on items and areas eligible for government support. I do not wish to restrict the responsibility of politicians and pass the burden of decision-making on to others. I just want to make this clear: Politicians cannot take the decisions on their own. Interaction is needed. I welcome the fact that today's forum constitutes a step in that direction. The motto on the reverse of the invitation card is the right one, in my view. In fact, it ought to be on the front so that nobody overlooks it: "Art is the daughter of freedom (Schiller). Politics is the art of the possible (Pavese¹⁴)." Two completely different men said that. Our task is to combine it: Art as the daughter of freedom, and politics as the art of the possible.

¹⁴ Cesare Pavese, 1908–1950, Italian critic, publisher's reader, manager of publishing company, "Il Compagno"

Chanson by Kristin Horn

Let me say something before the next chanson. It is called "How Africans sing". Some of you may consider it strange for me to sing a chanson with this title at a forum on German culture. In my view, it is vitally important for our culture that we examine foreign cultures, instead of merely tolerating them. True, it is progress if we no longer destroy them, but we should deal with them more.

So singt der Afrikaner

Gewalt ist schrecklich, schrecklich ist Gewalt!
N'kosi sikilele Afrika! So singt der Afrikaner.

Ihr habt uns verwiesen in die Zwischenwelt der Sklavenwelt,
halb Mensch und halb Tier, nicht mehr Tier, noch nicht Mensch,
und die Peitsche hat geknallt
und uns den Rücken gebrannt mit weißer Herrenhand,
doch das ist dein Land, Afrikaner, das ist unser Land,
unser Heimatland, das uns geboren.
Scharf wie ein Peitschenhieb
klingt das Wort des schwarzen Mannes
in des weißen Mannes Ohren.

Gewalt ist schrecklich, schrecklich ist Gewalt!
N'kosi sikilele Afrika! So singt der Afrikaner.

Ihr lehrtet unsre Kinder eure Sprache,
und fremd sprachen unsre Kinder und verachteten
das Wort ihrer Väter, denn das Wort war schwarz und alt.
Doch es ist Anfang und Ende eins mit dem Sein,
und bei euch klingt selbst ein Wort wie Sonne
rechteckig wie ‚Dollarschein‘
und ‚Baum‘ und ‚Tier‘ wie ‚Haus‘ und ‚Tür‘.

Mercedes wie das Winseln eines Hundes,
eines weißen Herren Hund.

Gewalt ist schrecklich, schrecklich ist Gewalt!
N'kosi sikilele Afrika! So singt der Afrikaner.

Erst waren wir die blutdürstigen Wilden,
dann die Tiere mit dem Wollhaar auf dem Kopf
und dann Marxisten, und wir hatten doch die Fäuste nur geballt.
Und für die milchweißen Kinder im Überfluß
Sarottimoor und Mohrenkopf und Negerkuß,
kannibalisch süße Hochgenüsse.
Doch mächtig erhebt sich das schwarze Wort
gegen das weiße Geschwätz und die inhaltsleeren Redeflüsse.

Gewalt ist schrecklich, schrecklich ist Gewalt!
N'kosi sikilele Afrika! So singt der Afrikaner.

Erst gabt ihr uns die Peitsche und den Hunger,
und dann habt ihr uns mit Almosen und Waffen,
unsre Brüder zu bekriegen, eure Schulden heimgezahlt.
Und unsre uralten Tänze käuflich gemacht
und die wilde schwarze Maske zum Grinsen gebracht,
doch das ist nicht, wie wenn der Neger lacht.
Entwürdigter Kontinent, deine weißen Götter stürzen nicht,
bevor der Himmel brennt.

Gewalt ist schrecklich, schrecklich ist Gewalt!
N'kosi sikilele Afrika! So singt der Afrikaner.

Werft ihr nur unsre Dichter ins Gefängnis,
denn wir tragen ihre Wörter auf dem Leibe
und die wärmen uns und machen unsre Köpfe klar und kalt
und geben Würde zurück und Stolz, uns zu sehn,
denn du bist schön, Afrikaner, deine schwarze Haut ist schön
und voller Anmut sind die schwarzen Frauen.
Magisch ist die Zauberkraft unsrer Dichter,
denn sie schärfen uns den Blick und unser Selbstvertrauen.

Gewalt ist schrecklich, schrecklich ist Gewalt!
N'kosi sikilele Afrika! So singt der Afrikaner.

Wir dürfen euch nicht hassen,
nicht den Pfeil vom Bogen lassen,
denn wir sind doch Kinder eines Vaters,
dem, als er uns zeugte, einer wie der andre galt.
Doch unser schwarzer Kopf hat Entfremdung gelernt
und uns mit eurem weißen Denken aus der Mitte entfernt
und macht euch Angst mit euren eignen Waffen.
Du bist auf dich allein gestellt, Afrikaner,
und dein Recht am Brot der Welt mußt du dir selbst schaffen.

Gewalt ist schrecklich, schrecklich ist Gewalt!
N'kosi sikilele Afrika! So singt der Afrikaner.

Dr Ulla Hahn, Introduction to the Panel Discussion

"Bridges or a Gap Between the Avant-Garde and the Public?"

Allow me to start my introduction to the discussion with an observation concerning the topic "Bridges between the avant-garde and the public". In my view, there must not be any bridges between the avant-garde and the public. Why not? Avant-garde – a term from the military field – means the vanguard, pioneers, leaders. To stay with the metaphor, the public would be the troops, the followers. And the bridge? Why a bridge? What has to be bridged? Is there an abyss between the avant-garde and the public, and does a raging torrent flow there? I think not.

There is a gap that exists and must continue to do so. Avant-garde artists who deliberately make sure that others can keep up are not true avant-gardists. The word "deliberately" is important in this context. "Ganc ane wec den smalen stec." This sentence by the mystic philosopher Meister Eckhart¹⁵ means "Follow directly the narrow path." This is also the artist's path. The artist is someone who penetrates the thicket armed with an axe and clears a way, a way that has not existed previously. He is somebody who climbs a mountain whose peak moves further and further away, the closer he comes to it. Anyone could of course follow him straightaway, but that is very arduous.

Avant-garde art has always been intended for the "happy few", for those who understand or seek to understand a work of art which makes do with minimum redundancy and traditional links, which as it were arouses a desire for innovation. But works that yesterday caused tempers to run high are today already a firm part of the artistic

¹⁵ Meister Eckhart, mystic. 1260–1327, Dominican in Cologne, "Religiosität der Innerlichkeit"

assets. Avant-garde art is not a product, but a process, the forefront of a process. It undergoes constant renewal. It stands the test as art by in turn giving rise to traditions. Hölderlin or Kafka, insider tips in their time, are today not missing in any school textbook.

Like an endless migration – that is how I like to picture it – the large reading public move past or follow their authors, stopping time and again at the camp sites of the former avant-garde, always keeping the contemporary within sight at a certain distance, occasionally losing sight of them. Who is to decide whether it is worthwhile dealing with this or that work of art, whether it is worthwhile approaching it when redundant parts have almost vanished and traditional links are at best discernible through their negation.

Avant-garde art, especially the visual arts and music, poses difficulties in cases where a work of art as such scarcely exists any longer. Here I have in mind certain types of Earth Art or a concert by John Cage¹⁶ to which he invited people and after a period of silence declared: That was the concert. Here the notion of experience, which should be the basis of art, has largely disappeared. A gap has emerged for its own sake in keeping with the principle: a work of art is a success if nobody can understand it. Here sense and nonsense lie close together. People who exploit this circumstance, who – to use the metaphor of the mountain once more – regard the Weserbergland¹⁷ as though they were climbing the Himalayan Mountains, will always exist. These avant-garde gladiators are bent on something new as if searching for an effective advertising slogan for a detergent. They are acting as though the artist has to ask what is new and not what is the truth, his own truth that he alone can express in a certain way.

This pseudo avant-garde can only function with the applause of their claqueurs, according to the motto: I am the only one who understands this work. This is not a condemnation of the intermediaries and explainers of the avant-garde. In this respect, too, the boundaries

¹⁶ John Cage. Born in 1912, American composer, author and artist

¹⁷ Weserbergland. A range of hills up to 528 metres high, situated in north-west Germany

are fluent. The more art becomes detached from traditions, the more it needs explanations. Arnold Gehlen¹⁸ pointed this out in his time. But there must be a plausible relationship between the exegesis and the artistic experience. I want to see and hear art and music, without a need for them to be explained to me.

Explanations which claim that the emperor's new clothes are involved merely increase the estrangement of the work of art from the public, thus widening the gap. Hence if there is virtually an intrinsic gap between the avant-garde and the public, should the two not simply be left to themselves? Basically speaking, yes. In a historical perspective, the avant-garde always assert themselves and find their place in the canon of art.

Nevertheless, some things are possible so that at least the gap between the public and the avant-garde does not become greater. I suggest a roundabout way in this connection. To comprehend today's avant-garde, it is necessary to deal with the avant-garde from yesterday and the day before in a natural and understanding manner. To put it in a nutshell: The road to the avant-garde takes us via the classics.

Like all other areas of life, the arts cannot exist in the long run if they are detached from their traditions. Negation of those traditions is possible for a while only. It does not constitute or replace a specific stance. How the individual artist handles those traditions is, of course, another matter. He should be left completely on his own in this respect. Any interference by the government is wholly inappropriate in this context. It should not act as an arbiter of art.

Does this mean that the government should entirely stand aloof from art production? No. I would like to see indirect intervention, for example via certain forms of tax relief and support for small private units that promote particular areas of the arts. Between the government and artists there should be private intermediaries and experts.

I am not sure whether the government should create space for artists, considering that art can all too easily end up as a playground.

¹⁸ Arnold Gehlen. 1904–1976, German sociologist and philosopher, "Anthropologische Forschungen"

Artists need resistance, their axe in the thicket. Does not he who supports the avant-garde take away their bite?

What can the government do for the other side, the public? All institutions designed to foster understanding for contemporary art deserve generous backing. This should start in schools themselves. One should encourage artists and writers to visit schools. This is already happening. Even if it does not prove possible to kindle a liking for the avant-garde, then at least respect and tolerance can be aroused for their works that one does not yet understand. Politicians who feel they have to give marks in public – I am not referring to censorship, but to marks, which I also consider highly questionable – ought to display more respect and tolerance, without which no art can thrive. Tolerance does not imply indifference. There should by all means be a debate on art, but one conducted with a desire to understand, and not with the aim of prevailing with your own point of view.

Allow me to outline another means of gaining access to the avant-garde: Let us look once more at the mountain scaled by the artist, at the artistic landscape, not in a diachronic fashion, but in a synchronous manner. If we stand at the bottom of the mountain of literature, we discover edifices from all eras at various levels. Between so-called light fiction and the peaks of world literature, which will incidentally always remain avant-garde, there is a wide and densely populated expanse. Just as it is possible to reach the contemporary avant-garde via yesterday's, one can climb up from Ganghofer to Kafka. "Reading up" is how a librarian once put it at a discussion after one of my readings.

It is not always the best who sneer at educational aids. The Bertelsmann Book Club has embarked on an interesting venture in this respect with its series "Love novels of world literature". Why should it not be possible for someone who has until now only consumed novels by Utta Danella¹⁹ to enjoy Fontane's "Effi Briest"? Incidentally, Fontane published all his novels in instalments in the periodical "Gartenlaube". And why should somebody who has read up from Ut-

¹⁹ Utta Danella. Contemporary German author of light novels, "Quartett im September"

ta Danella to "Effi Briest" then not proceed to reading Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel "Love in the Time of Cholera" or Goethe's "Werther"? In the arts, nothing becomes outmoded. But this has to be proved time and again. For someone in the world of the theatre, furnishing this proof is part of his daily work. And how enjoyable it would be if in a museum we could see Dürer next to Lichtenstein, Beuys next to Rembrandt, Hopper next to Vermeer. In Hamburg, Zender²⁰ once invited contemporary composers to write pieces of music, which were then incorporated into a concert of classical music. To my mind, this juxtaposition is a very good way of familiarizing people with the contemporary avant-garde.

²⁰ Hans Zender. Born in 1936, German conductor and composer. 1984–1987 musical director of the Hamburg State Opera

Professor Kasper König "Visual Arts in Public Places – Creating Space, instead of Occupying it"

Since Dr Vogel referred to the quotations from Friedrich Schiller and Cesare Pavese, I would also like to offer a quotation that is connected with art because it particularly appeals to me and reflects my understanding of art: "Art is nice, but it's hard work", Karl Valentin once said.

The visual arts are a very special case. In recent years they have met with an incredible response in the Federal Republic of Germany. It is now very trendy to deal with the arts. The concept of the avant-garde has become largely effete not only for artists, but also for the interested public (I would not actually speak of a "viewership"). On various occasions it has been suggested that this term be given back to the French military.

The subject on which I would like to express some thoughts mainly concerns the psychological situation of present-day artists. They are especially embraced and pampered by the public and media interested in the arts. Their objectives and their unrestrained demands, which are of course bound up with their artistic intentions, often fail to be met.

I would like to take up the metaphor of the mountain and countryside offered by Ulla Hahn. Carl Andre, an American Minimal artist, works reductively, referring to the developmental history of art, be it to Constantin Brancusi²¹ or to Cycladic sculptures. He expresses a definitive interpretation of art and art history when he says: "You climb a mountain because it exists, and you create art because it does not exist." Naturally, this does not mean that works of art are created out of ignorance of previous art; it means, however, that you approach

²¹ Constantin Brancusi, 1876–1957, Romanian sculptor in Paris, today considered a pioneer of abstract sculpture

topics and artistic representations of the past differently in order to throw open your own cultural background.

Sculpture Project in Münster

Presumably one of the reasons why Dr Benecke invited me here is this attitude, which I was able to demonstrate in connection with the sculpture project at Münster in Westphalia, the region I come from. Ten years ago I already worked together with Klaus Bussmann, Director of the Westphalian Museum, on an exhibition in Münster. I have always had very strong ties with that region and with the landscape there, probably because I lived abroad so long. That is why I wanted to ensure that the oeuvres of the sculpture project did justice to the "genius loci". The aim was not to occupy a place with a work of art, but to create space with it. We invited artists to have a look round Münster and choose sites for their contributions.

Before the project I had diverse opportunities, often unintended, to provide information on it. The preparations lasted about two and a half years; they were a kind of ideological tour d'horizon. We had to convince the trade union, the rotary club, the episcopal art commission and the university art committee.

The experience I gained was, in hindsight, very positive. We laid the basis for our work by obtaining three sponsors: the Westphalia/Lippe Association, the City of Münster and the State of North-Rhine/Westphalia contributed financially to the project. We were able to work very well with this constellation because if any sponsor required that we excessively comply with his wishes, we pointed to the others' wishes. We were thus able to hold a dialogue with the artists without being hindered by alien interests. There was no jury and no commission, there was only our responsibility for a certain time, which I regard as very important when dealing with art and virtually as the precondition for the individual's judgment always remaining revisable. In contrast a jury, which appears to be objective, cannot revise its judgment as easily. A certain narrowmindedness can easily emerge

because it feels it must have taken the right decision. In addition there are political and administrative mechanisms that are detrimental to creation or to the examination of new means of creation.

Art in Public Places

When artists have to deal with public places or with the public at large, their problem is one of being left completely alone today. They have to become their own fictional patrons, as it were. One of the causes for artists exposing themselves to this is that they want to break out of the hermetically sealed art business. As the arts have now become so "popular", tutelage has also become very strong.

The popularity of the arts as well as this tutelage were reasons not only for the project in Münster but also for artists increasingly occupying themselves with so-called public places. For only in this way can a town become an item for artists to investigate.

What are these so-called public places? First of all they are those areas left by speculators which are not occupied by department stores or by "paradisical" shopping precincts conceived by well-meaning urban planners. Models have to be created for designing public areas. Artists, too, must participate in this in a very conscious and self-critical manner.

This logically leads to the demand that artists working in the public domain should strive for a situation where the work of art as such is no longer evident. The work of art exists within itself; it becomes plausible from within. This intrinsic plausibility is in the final analysis an inherent characteristic of art.

Beuys' Oak Project

Perhaps the most prominent example of this inherent characteristic is Beuys' work involving lard and felt, which was mentioned earlier on. I would like to cite another specific example, which had an interesting background but not always a strong response.



Joseph Beuys on the project "7000 oaks", Kassel 1982
Photo: Dieter Schwerdtle

Ten years ago we organized the first sculpture exhibition in Münster. The first part consisted of a general survey in the museum. In the second part we presented so-called autonomous sculptures outdoors. The third part comprised locational projects. Beuys was also invited to Münster. Initially he said placing certain sculptures in a town would amount to environmental pollution in aesthetic terms. But then he took part after all and also found his own approach to the project.

The dialogue on this project in Münster ultimately gave rise to the "prophetic project", which involved planting 7,000 oaks in Kassel and was perhaps one of his most interesting projects. It was bound up very closely with the conditions of the art world in which art is made and received. Though intended as a contribution to the last "documenta" exhibition but one, it acquired its own independent structure extending beyond that exhibition.

An artist does not just want to be a producer or agent of a certain machinery. Beuys knew how to create an independent organism stemming from idealistic, anarchic factors. Of course, there were also philosophical and political motives.

Incidentally, the question of government involvement in funding and supervision played a decisive role. It was certainly very unusual to plant the oaks under the motto "Afforestation instead of administration" in the town of Kassel, which is situated near the border with the GDR, in the middle of Germany where there are still intact oak forests. Beuys' aim was to have each tree, with its own basalt stela, donated by an individual. However, in reality the situation was different. Beuys himself paid for over two thirds of the 7,000 trees by selling other works of art. To a certain extent, collectors obliged him by donating trees in return for works they received from him. This conveys the impression of an idealistic, democratic concept; this was indeed a major concern of his, but his true motivation lay in his action as an artist.

There are numerous other examples of art's inherent characteristic of coming to grips with the material and the surroundings for the work of art. In exhibition halls, the artist rightly expresses his personality as

his own; in public places, on the other hand, he is required to take second place to his work and his own being.

He provides communicative and social stimuli for the common weal, for making use of open spaces. At the same time he thus gives expression to a general desire of artists: to assume once more the part that artists traditionally played until the 18th century.

The Arts and the Common Weal

The artist's traditional role serving the common weal was brought to an end with tremendous speed at the beginning of this century (cf. Marcel Duchamp and others). This was a great victory for autonomous art, with major qualities being gained. For this reason, the term "avant-garde" was used. Art had a strategic dimension, a radical orientation. But then it became apparent that it is very important for the artist not just to devote himself to work that emerges by itself and is committed to itself, but also to accept contact with a public who may not manifest themselves until this contact occurs.

Terms like "public" and "viewership" are hard to define. If you speak of a viewership, you suddenly discover that they are consumers. If you speak of citizens, you suddenly find that they are people who are addressed by certain interest groups and associations and are euphemistically described as citizens. The "public" or "viewership" are thus a very complex, non-communicative group of people. The town, which always permitted conflicts to be settled and communication to take place, has failed us.

On the subject of art in towns I have to offer you a very harsh assessment as well as a suggestion. The accomplishments in more or less all towns of the Federal Republic of Germany during the period of reconstruction were feeble. A kind of social assistance for artists was provided. This resulted in some items in public places that are highly deplorable, that are insulting to the artist and shameful for the observer. This is now accepted, but time and again there is also very strong aggression, virtually vandalism, directed against works of art installed

in towns. Interestingly enough, people have not protested about the new multi-storey car parks or the concrete blocks with flats for which high rents have to be paid, but which are in fact not even suitable as rabbit hutches. People have put up with this. However, sculptures that are erected may prove to be truly provocative because they are not directly purposive. The practical handling of art in public places is so displeasing that it is necessary to consider and discuss it anew.

Temporary Removal of Art from the City

I would like to report on a project in Frankfurt/Main which will, I hope, become reality. The city is making some very impetuous efforts which seem downright naive and carefree and are marked by a visionary optimism of the kind encountered in the 1950s. This is very likeable. When the head of the city's building department asked me what I wanted to create for Frankfurt, I suggested removing all sculptures, fountains, etc. erected in Frankfurt since 1945 and placing them in order of size in an exhibition hall, not unlike in a contractor's yard. Partition walls would separate the works of art so that each could be seen on its own.

As you know, these works of art today stand in front of large companies, banks and public authorities. They are usually abstract and created by famous artists so that they correspond to the image of the respective institution. More modest administrative buildings, for example police stations in suburbs or local tax offices, are generally adorned with droll bears, herons and the like. Such an exhibition could be used to trace cultural history from 1945 up to the present day.

In some cases it will, of course, scarcely be possible to remove the fountains and sculptures. I am also certain that some of the works would not be re-installed if the artists were today asked whether they wanted that. Some will agree to their works being removed because the disharmony between the oeuvre and the surroundings has become evident. In many instances, the situation has changed radically. The old trees are no longer there or new ones have been planted in

tubs. The road that once had two lanes now has six. The building to which the work of art related has been torn down. No relationship at all exists any more between the works of art and their surroundings. I therefore feel it would be interesting to carry out the project I suggest. Other towns would probably sneer at it, but I believe that a city like Frankfurt/Main has enough self-assurance to cope with this.

Such a project would initiate a true process of learning. Art is simply too important, or it is not that important, to be dealt with only in passing. Many of the works created then do not relate in any way to their period of origin; they are, as it were, the mere application of modernism. Radical ideas of the 1920s (e.g. Cubism and Constructivism) became easy-to-handle works of art 40 to 50 years later. Councillors of all political parties approved of their erection because they felt they had to do something for the artists.

Admittedly these questions extend beyond the arts and lead to a historical process. But they also induce us to deal with the future in a more responsible fashion. In this respect this self-critical stance also serves the initiation of a process of learning with respect to art.

An Appeal for Art in the Public Domain

The artist Ludger Gerdes²² from Düsseldorf drafted a manifesto on the artist's role in society. He supported a fairly traditional position. Setting out from the current discussion, he stated that artists widely felt it was their task to criticize social deficiencies. There was nothing wrong with that. However, it was important for artists not only to criticize, but also to make a constructive contribution. They should not just analyze and reflect on existing shortcomings, but try to bring about changes and exercise their right to make suggestions in the institutions open to them. Although it was true that artists' work could barely have a direct political impact, they could perform politically orientated work by gearing it to the community, to the areas in which

²² Ludger Gerdes. Contemporary artist (visual arts) from Düsseldorf

people live. It would therefore be desirable for artists to consider again what role their discipline could and should play in the public domain in an open society. They should again start to discover and accept towns as a site for their work so as to help improve the conditions with the devices at their disposal.

Gerdes went on to say that towns were the immediate living areas for most of us. Ever since the industrial revolution they had increasingly become huge processing machines and inclement warehouses run by profit-seekers. Artists should begin, just as architects had been doing for some time, to consider whether it was not possible to change this wilderness in some way. Not just in museums we should indulge in a cult of sensitivity, individualism and subjectivity, give free play to cranky utopias and metaphysics, engage in formalistic and other didactics or continue the idioms of the containerized art world. Artists could instead try, not least with the aid of museums, to gear their work towards the reactivation of public life, of public culture requiring the vividness of decorativeness and playfulness. They could contribute to the layout, design and embellishment of our living areas so that the latter could again become forums, sites of multi-faceted, convivial and entertaining public life. And they could help to make towns again be viewed as a place where people act more politically and pursue their interests resolutely and vigorously.

Dealing with modern art gives rise to the recognition that art can never be a therapy for society, as many modernists would have liked to believe. But it can respond to the demands and challenges of reality and help to change and improve the latter. Art can make an offer.

Günther Beelitz

"Schiller, c'est moi – Elitist Theatre at the Tax-Payer's Expense?"

Mr König cited Karl Valentin: "Art is nice, but it's hard work." To your remarks one could add what Karl Valentin also said: art means doing what you can, not what you want to. This, I feel, has a lot to do with our topic.

The subject I was requested to speak on is one that anyone from the theatre is asked about most often. Since I assume that there are many theatre-goers here, I would like to begin with some comments on the first part of the topic, "Schiller, c'est moi", as seen from a practitioner's standpoint. Then I shall proceed to the somewhat drier part concerning theatre's functions.

Classics of the Theatre

Let me first quote from a letter sent by a fellow theatre manager, whose contents I fully endorse: "If one person feels I stage too few classics, someone else accuses me of producing too many of them and states that the audience here is not interested in the classics. In last year's review of "Faust", you yourself urged me not to start with the prologue in heaven in any new production of the work, but also to include the prelude on the stage, but in this winter you say that the performance should have begun with the prologue in heaven and that the prelude on the stage was superfluous. While you yourself stated in your report on last year's season that I should by all means have presented a play like Sudermann's²¹ "Sandkinder", an avant-garde piece at the time, and that you would gladly have forgone various other novelties, this year you reproach me – now that I have at last acquired the play and staged it for your sake – for including such rubbish in the

²¹ Hermann Sudermann. 1857–1928, dramatist, "Der Hasenfelthändler"

repertoire. Consequently, it seems that the best thing for me to do is to follow my own path and try to work as artistically as possible."

Those are the words of a provincial theatre manager (today a somewhat pejorative term) from Hildesheim in 1910. The situation has scarcely changed. This dispute could have taken place today. It is my daily bread. However, perseverance over the years leads to the contours of a theatre, maybe even to an era, that are later perhaps even spoken of favourably. A theatre's repertoire always depends on the classics, not only those of one's own language and history, but also the great classics of Antiquity, of the Middle Ages, the so-called German classics and the modern classics.

But what is "classic"? Nestroy's remark "That's classic" and Chianti Classico have one thing in common. The comedy figure describes striking, outstanding events as something typical. The wine bears an indication of its origin; it, too, is typical in the sense of being exemplary. Today we still speak of the old classics. In addition there is the use of the term "classic" to describe a nation's cultural highlights. In the case of our subject-matter these are, for example, Shakespeare in England, Corneille, Racine and Molière in France, Lessing, Schiller and Goethe in this country. In the field of theatre – and this is important for our topic of "the avant-garde and the public" – education is mainly referred to theatre's literary substance, to the drama and its action. Its object is presented through the classics, which convey to the educated an exemplary picture in a generally humanitarian form, in other words classically. When we today speak of the classics of the theatre, we mainly have those authors in mind. But we do not necessarily associate a value judgment with this, but instead a historical categorization; that era was for a long time or still is regarded as exemplary from a literary point of view.

Education through the Theatre

However, as the awareness of historical relativity grew, theatre underwent a change. Here, too, we encounter two ways of thinking.

There are still people with a grammar school or university education who feel that the classics are musty. This means that a work of art of great importance as regards form and substance is viewed by them as outdated and antiquated. The supporters of the other way of thinking speak all too often of the need for faithfulness to the original. They demand to see the classics performed in the way they believe the authors intended them to be performed.

Both groups speak of education. The first group, those who want to free the classics of their mustiness, deliberately or undeliberately assumes a familiarity with the old educational assets on which today's production draws. The second group is content with the mere reproduction of educational assets. Both groups regard education as something static and not as a process. This is, in my opinion, a misunderstanding of the concept of education. On the one hand, the latter is confused with simply extensive knowledge or school education, which can but facilitate the path towards education. On the other, social forms – though valuable per se – are overestimated. However, it is the educational process that forms the basis of the staging of classics. Education is not something absolute. It is subject to historical developments. The staging results from changing and evolving education, with the developments not necessarily being improvements, but certainly always changes. The production of the play need not, therefore, be unfaithful to the original. If it is to retain its vitality, a classic must be seen from a present-day vantage point by both those staging it and the public. Those who demand faithfulness to the original often mean in reality their own present viewpoint shaped ten or more years ago by their schooling or university studies. Nobody today recalls the original performance of Schiller's "Die Räuber". Attempting to reconstruct it would merely be inaccurate and fit for a museum.

Faithfulness to the Original

In the Soviet Union, classics are produced with great care and dedication in the historical form as a kind of relict from an earlier society.

Such productions appear lifeless and old-fashioned; they are confined to copying and are far removed from issues that concern us today. Many people undoubtedly feel that such an approach is indeed desirable in order to be faithful to the original. However, I believe that such an approach not only appears antiquated; it also clearly means forfeiting a dynamic theatre, which must progress or else it will become ossified.

But why do we stage so many classics? The reply is that we can only determine our own position if we view it in a historical context. It is not possible to answer the question of who we are without asking the question of where we come from.

Lessing's "Nathan the Wise", for example, concerns the limits of pure tolerance. For decades, it was seen from an idealistic viewpoint as advocating education for tolerance. That was a correct and understandable interpretation in the period after the Second World War. A much more burning question today is: What does tolerance achieve? The plea for rationalism has been superseded by the anxious question as to what it can achieve. And this becomes an indictment, just like the constantly unfulfilled demand voiced by Lessing the rationalist.

Let me illustrate this. Our production of this play in Düsseldorf in 1983 was influenced by that anxious question asked by the actors and by a director who was about to reach the age of 40 and endeavoured to incorporate part of himself into the production. We did not alter Lessing's text, apart from a few cuts and shifts needed for theatrical purposes. But of course the play was staged differently then than 20 or 80 years earlier. The production sets out from today's position. It cannot look at Lessing's Jerusalem without bearing in mind the current situation in Lebanon. The famous passage "... things are no longer so safe in Lebanon ... you should be on your guard ..." is nearly always dropped. Needless to say, the Arab problem existed then, too.

The point of view may change, which is in turn the outcome of a change. The more we look back differently, the more we have changed. This helps us to perceive where and who we are and that we are not hermetically sealed off in today's world. To put it the other way round:

Without looking at the classics it is not possible to determine where we stand today.

Even in the visual arts, Mr König has had recourse to the art of earlier eras. I find this pleasing because I consider it very important. A classic's eternal value consists in providing the coordinates for determining our present-day position. If we thus say that the production of a classic must also serve to determine our current position, it has to tread a narrow path: on the one side it risks plunging into the archaic, and on the other into sheer modernism.

Schiller, c'est moi

Permit me to cite briefly two other examples from my own experience. In 1980, at the end of the turbulent seventies, we staged Schiller's "Maria Stuart" and lapsed into the negative side of "Schiller, c'est moi", in my opinion. On that occasion the director and the dramatic adviser assumed that Mary and Elizabeth are in fact two parts of a whole, that Mary symbolizes emotion and Elizabeth rationality. They felt that this division is the outcome of a male view of the two women, a view prompted by a defensive attitude which reduces women to certain characteristics. In order to restore on stage the unity of the figure, we decided to let one actress play both roles. In the only scene in Schiller's famous play where the two queens meet, at Fotheringhay, Mary sat daydreaming in a room in which three projectors cast three rectangles of different sizes onto three walls of different sizes. The actress played the part of Mary in a nightdress. As soon as she stood in front of her shadow cast on the wall, she spoke – with a different voice – the part of Elizabeth seen in silhouette. When facing the audience she was Mary imploring Elizabeth, and when she turned round so that the audience saw only her back, she was Elizabeth. As Mary she approached Elizabeth's royal mantle hanging on a clothes rack, and when she reappeared from behind it she was naked. For a moment Mary thus dropped all form of disguise. Mary cast her protected truth at the royal ermine, a symbol of her rival, Elizabeth.

In my view, not only this inner situation was alienated by this trivial symbolism. What annoyed me more was the assumption that Schiller had strictly separated the opposites of rationality and passion, the mind and the body, and divided them between Mary and Elizabeth. But the setting tipped the scales: The men's world was – as is often the case now – portrayed by statesmanly conduct, by men in modern attire in leather armchairs or in telephone booths, political power being presented as a kind of stock-exchange crisis management, with briefcases, sunglasses and walkie-talkies as appurtenances. Schiller's play was used for lampooning the organizers of men's power aspirations and the suppression of feelings.

Of course, Schiller is a constant challenge to those staging his plays and to the audience. This challenge cannot be met by a routine approach, nor by such conceptual contortions, which at that time, in 1980, were intended to generate associations and a certain solidarity with the imprisoned terrorist Ulrike Meinhoff; but this does not offer any explanation of Mary's situation as a prisoner for twelve years.

In actual fact, the director did not want to stage Schiller's "Maria Stuart", but merely to draw on the play in order to impose on the theatre-goers his own ideas about our present era. It could even be described as a terrorist attempt to transpose Schiller into our day and age. This is what the critic Georg Hensel²⁴ meant in 1979, at the height of this trend when the effects of 1968 had spread to the theatre, by stating: Especially the most gifted young directors do not want to be the playwright's agents. They want to write themselves, and they only allow the classics to come in via the back entrance.

This phenomenon of directors didactically interpreting classics has existed at all times. It could even be said that classics are only used, to quote Hensel, as "the quarry for obtaining teaching material" and that part or even all the substance offered by a classic is dispensed with for dramatic or textual purposes.

²⁴ Georg Hensel. Born in 1923, theatre critic, editor, writer, since 1975 theatre critic for the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" (FAZ), 1983 Egon Erwin Kisch Prize



Scene from Lessing's
"Nathan the Wise",
Düsseldorf Theatre 1983
Photo: Lore Bernbach

Scene from Schiller's "Maria Stuart", Düsseldorf Theatre 1980. Photo: Lore Bernbach



Language as a Vehicle of Thought

This remodelling is accompanied by a process that I personally find the most lamentable, namely the loss of language and the shaping of the latter by the actor. Thus some people say, often quite rightly, that there are evidently few actors left, especially in the young generation, who know how to handle Schiller's texts. Many of them oscillate helplessly between parody and declamation. The theatre manager from Essen mentioned earlier on, Hansgünter Heyme, explained this situation with reference to Schiller's "Don Carlos", which he staged some years ago first in Cologne and then in Stuttgart: "I opted for feelings and for the impossibility of couching them in language." He added that he had simply left the usual linguistic treatment of Schiller to the older generation. However, I believe it is essential that we rediscover language as the substance and solidity of figures, in other words language as an instrument which controls the entire body and which, in addition to verbal information, can still convey to us today the thoughts and feelings of the classics as a whole. This is what was meant by the former publisher and then director, Ernst Wendt, who sadly died recently, when he said: Today it is incredibly hard to utter a sentence that is weightier than a sentence spoken by Mr Köpke²⁵. This is becoming ever harder, the lower the level of the other sentences spoken in public. The sentences that we still utter on stage are becoming more and more risible in comparison because the other reality, which I find risible, is growing ever truer. Given this situation, those of us in the world of the theatre must make a big effort to counter this collapse of language.

This has of late given rise to a trend – perhaps even a perspective for the coming nineties – of displaying a different kind of faithfulness to the original when handling classics. Although the characters are psychologically analyzed, are seen through our eyes today, the plays are no longer reduced to these alone; instead we try to get to grips with the

²⁵ Karl-Heinz Köpke. Former news reader at the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlichen rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (ARD), main news presenter in the "Tagesschau"

old text. Wendt also described this very aptly by saying: "The figures of a classic play are always greater in stature than the people who actually exist around us, ourselves included." When working on such classics, we are aghast at the loss of language inflicted on ourselves over the last 100 years, probably through our own actions. This gives rise to a feeling of humility and impotence, but also the attempt to save some of the language for our own time. It is in this perspective that our endeavours should be seen.

The Original Text and Present-Day Issues

To mark the opening of the Prince Regent Theatre we shall stage my favourite play, "Nathan the Wise", from a different angle. It will not be a case of merely updating it. Before starting the production, we discussed a whole range of substantive issues. They are similar to the ones in Düsseldorf, as the period between the two productions has not been all that long: Why was it not until the Holocaust that the Germans began to understand the things that should have caused them concern as early as "Nathan"? Does a moral buildup in the theatre lead to an aesthetic zero option? Is there at all a character in the play who is not driven away, on a journey, without a home? What would happen if somebody were to read the parable of the ring at the negotiating table in Geneva? Nathan the Wise? What is the difference between Turks and Jews? Are all people really equal? Is Lessing's fairy-tale humanity inhumane? Is Nathan not afraid? Is it a pleasantly intricate story of a German family? Is Nathan related to Shylock? Are all of them – the Dervish, Nathan, the Templar – made happy by the drama or are they the deceived victims? Have they conquered the domain of truly utopian life?

To be sure, as in the Düsseldorf production, there are superficially modern attributes. The Templar carries his few possessions in a plastic bag just like a modern-day youngster. Sultan Saladin, dressed in a khaki uniform, puts on his sunglasses when he wants to strike a pose. The monk daubs crosses on walls just like a graffiti painter. But these

symbols are subordinate, are brief, ironical references to present-day peripheral phenomena. The core of Lessing's text is taken seriously. In other words, it is examined from today's vantage point to ascertain how much of it is still intelligible to us. This stocktaking is positive. A rich Jew lives in the fear that some day his nearest and dearest, his adopted daughter, may be taken away from him. And she is taken away from him, rightfully so according to the letter of the law. Relating this story on stage does not require any updating. It has remained up-to-date.

Thus Nathan is a simple and wise man, not least as a businessman, who does not find it difficult to be successful externally, but the ravages of religious war have deprived him of the possession he truly treasured: his family. The parable of the ring becomes an escape, without the validity of its content being queried. How can I, Nathan, escape from the tightening noose? But with the parable Nathan only manages to defer his fate for a moment. He loses his daughter all the same.

We have tried to preserve the text in its original form and use it for questions posed from a present-day vantage point. The play is thus neither antiquated nor excessively modern. We have not taken the position of being more advanced than Lessing, but the situation is clearly delimited: over there, Lessing's play – over here, us. We are performing Lessing today. Or, to use Heiner Müller's²⁶ words, the reality of a drama is always the present. It is a time of radical change.

Theatre and Social Integration

This brings me to the second part of my topic, "elitist theatre at the tax-payer's expense?". In the last edition of "Theater Heute", the critic Reinhardt Stumm wrote that, due to the stormy innovation of recent years, theatre is on the verge of collapsing; it is now hanging on the

²⁶ Heiner Müller. Born in the GDR in 1929, wrote socialist dramas and political revues emulating Bert Brecht, "Germania – Tod in Berlin"

ropes, gasping and shadowboxing. The crisis which the theatre has been in since about 1967, following a good period between 1949 and 1964, is not one of lost functions, but of functional renewal prompted by occurrences that are not new in the history of society and the theatre. In the sixties and seventies, we always defined theatre as a vehicle of criticism. That is how we wanted it to be, and we cited Schiller's idea of theatre as an ethical institution. This critical function of the theatre has disappeared almost completely during the last three or four years. The performances of classics are again becoming patient, attentive and imaginative work on the texts; the question asked is: what do the texts still tell us today? Excessively subjective intervention by directors is being wholly abandoned. The structure of the plays is again being relied on.

Theatre always reacts to circumstances on which no definitive knowledge exists as yet. Due to this social function, the theatre has at all times been of great political importance in Germany. It not only contributed to the establishment of standard German in all German regions. At a time when Germany consisted of many small states, the theatre also helped to surmount particularism and bring about cultural unity. Thus it was from the outset an instrument of social integration, too. The existing, still functioning system of state and municipal theatres in Germany owes its origins and durability to these political factors. It must therefore not be viewed as a feudal or bourgeois legacy, but as an integrative element. As the period between 1960 and 1970 showed, the system is able to regenerate itself very quickly in accordance with these traditions. Whoever sets about changing it is interfering with an established but still effective system.

A Crisis in the Theatre?

All theatre crises have also made themselves felt as audience crises, including a temporary decrease in audiences. While producers and directors were uncertain about the function of the theatre, the audience responded to new presentations by asking whether the latter

were in fact still theatre. I feel this is the same question as that asked about the visual arts. Regional and local authorities, too, are at present asking whether it is still worthwhile preserving the theatre. This question is posed because of the growing cost of supporting theatres and the increasing budgetary constraints. It is backed up by the finding that only about eight per cent of the total population are theatre-goers.

A crisis also occurred among sponsors. In their view, the theatre was scarcely able any longer to convey its purpose to those not connected with it. In the 19th century and in the first part of the 20th century until after the Second World War, it ceased to perform not only its main function but also that of urban and social representation.

A major reason for this crisis was the abandonment of educational theatre. Remnants of this type of theatre, which was cultivated in the 19th century, are still to be found everywhere today. Its aim was to impart values and forms of behaviour, as contained mainly in classic plays. It sought to take possession of the audience and obtain the latter's approval. It was integrated into the concept of general education. As this concept lost its meaning, theatre on this basis became impossible.

Stimulating Imagination and Pleasure

The activities of today's theatre are no longer an object of education. The audience's attendance at the theatre involves formative processes, which no longer coincide with the old notion of educational theatre. In our highly rationalized society, theatre in all its forms is increasingly becoming the almost sole means of stimulating people's imagination. It counteracts the impoverishment of the faculty of visualization. The same applies to the powers of feeling, sensation and perception. The growing estrangement between art and the public at large that is detectable in advanced societies – the visual arts and modern music are such examples – makes it hard for art producers, painters, composers and writers to arouse greater interest through

their own efforts. They depend on intermediaries, on integrative instruments. The main instruments of such integration are concerts, exhibitions and the theatre. In the theatre, discoveries and formulations are conveyed to the public in a language that is less strange to them. Modern classics like Stravinsky, Bartok, Stockhausen, Rihm, etc. have been transmitted via ballet, concerts, dance theatre, old music, new poetry, via the pleasure of theatrical performances. An evening in the theatre not only has social motives; it also promises a joint, spontaneous experience within a group as well as a festive atmosphere. It is the direct contact between the stage and the audience that brings about the artistic event. This creative participation does not exist for television viewers. In both theory and practice, the theatre is no longer a cultural instrument for a specific class. Where it is still tied to socially definable strata, it will gradually lose these fetters, too. The social barriers that it comes up against are instead determined by the audience's education. The theatre requires of its audience something that television does not demand: a capacity for aesthetic experience and perception. Preparing the audience for the theatre thus means educating them for it and developing this ability to grasp not just images, but artistically formulated images.

German Theatre in Figures

In the Federal Republic of Germany there are 433 theatres. Together they have about 180,000 seats, and their artistic staff total approximately 17,500. While 64 theatres are privately owned, the others are publicly run and include 33 state theatres, 80 municipal theatres, 19 regional theatres and 6 municipal association theatres. According to statistics supplied by the German Theatre Association, Cologne, the grants to public theatres in the 1986/87 season reached DM 1.88 billion and were used to subsidize 33,000 performances of the public theatres. Local authorities contributed almost 60% of these funds, while the Laender accounted for a good 40%.

It is often claimed that theatre audiences are an elite on whom far too much money is spent. Here one can only reply with a remark made by a former president of this country: Culture is not a privilege for a few, but an offer available to everyone. Firstly, the theatre is open to everyone; he just has to come, regardless of whether he can read and write. He only needs to look and listen. Secondly, attendance at German theatres still exceeds 25 million visits a year, which compares favourably with the attendance figures at political rallies or the number of spectators at first-division football matches, which also have a theatrical element.

Theatre's noblest function is to provide pleasure. As Brecht²⁷ stated in his "Kleines Organon", we should not expect more of it than to teach us how to move pleasurably, both physically and mentally. And we derive a similar interpretation from our constitution, which states "Art shall be free". Art is not the purveyor of any ideology. It generates freedom — this is its inherent humanity, its function and utility for society.

Theatre is also one of the most effective cultural tools for preventing our towns from becoming desolate. Towns without their own theatre, often only catered for by inadequate guest performances, lack a centre; they appear organizationally and socially structured, but never intellectually. The conclusion sometimes drawn in a democratic society that traditional theatre is the cultural instrument of a feudal, bourgeois era and should therefore be abolished or cut back offers the wrong perspective. Theatre against the public, i.e. without the public, is just as absurd as theatre in which the audience no longer experience anything new, unusual or surprising. Both aberrations of theatre do not deserve high public expenditure, whose purpose is surely not to foster servility and simplemindedness. We use the public funds to stimulate the public's imagination, to develop their powers of perception, to enhance their faculty of judgment.

²⁷ Bert Brecht. 1898–1956. German socialist dramatist and lyricist. "The Three penny Opera", "Mother Courage and her Children", "Kleines Organon für das Theater" (1948): Brecht's theory of epic theatre based on "Verfremdung" (distancing effect)

Theatre as a place of education through images must be seen and supported along the same lines as universities. Its repertoire is just as valid as a syllabus and is merely more pleasurable. Everyone can decide for himself where one obtains greater human knowledge.

Allow me to finish with a quotation from somebody who was at the time a sharp-witted critic and is today a harassed fellow theatre manager: Günther Rühle²⁸. In April 1983 he wrote: "The public duty to preserve the theatre must not be laid down in law." I share his opinion. Instead the view must remain firmly rooted in our minds that theatre is an unrelinquishable cultural asset of our nation. This awareness must of course be fostered by the theatre itself, every evening. It must constantly demonstrate its powers of persuasion. The greater they are, the more certain will be the public's devotion to the theatre.

²⁸ Günther Rühle. Born in 1924, Dr phil., journalist, since 1985 manager of Frankfurt Theatre

Discussion

The discussion held after the speeches by Dr Vogel, Dr Hahn, Prof. König and Mr Beelitz mainly concerned

- the avant-garde as an entity and their behaviour,
- the public nature of the arts,
- promotion of the arts by private patrons and the government.

The questions (Q), answers (A) and comments (C) have not been recorded verbatim, but have been summarized.

The Avant-Garde

- (Q) Were the leaders of world literature avant-gardists during their life-time?
- (A) The leaders of world literature have probably always remained avant-gardists.
- (Q) Are theatre critics able to keep avant-garde art from the public or to advertise it? This applies not only to authors like Elfriede Jelinek ²⁹ or Wolfgang Bauer ³⁰, but also to those responsible for modern stage productions.
- (A) This question cannot be answered globally; instead one would have to deal with individual authors and productions. In the theatre, too, it is a moot point whether one should speak of "the avant-garde". The reasons for these doubts are similar to those that Professor König mentioned in connection with the visual arts.
- (Q) Can the avant-garde be recognizable as such? Do they not cease to be avant-garde as soon as they are recognized by their contemporaries?
- (A) There is the view that, once they are recognizable, the avant-garde are no longer avant-garde and have already become part of the canon. For many people, Beuys' works became modern classics as soon as they appeared in museums. However, even before they are recognizable, the avant-garde might be surmisable. At any rate, avant-garde art is initially problematic. Perhaps the quality of being problematic is a criterion for determining the avant-garde.

²⁹ Elfriede Jelinek. Born in 1946. Austrian writer (novels, plays, scripts), "Die Ausgesperrten" (book)

³⁰ Wolfgang Bauer. Born in 1941, Austrian writer and playwright, "Silvester oder Das Massaker im Hotel Sacher" (play)

(C) Presumably it is immaterial to the avant-garde whether they are recognized as such.

(C) Dr Hahn's rhetorical question of whether the avant-garde are not deprived of their bite if they receive support prompted a differentiated reply: If it were possible to promote artists as a whole, the avant-garde would not be likely to lose their vitality as a result of the support. However, if art were to survive without support – which is probably conceivable only in theory – the viability of the true avant-garde would soon be revealed.

Art in the Public Domain

(Q) Why is art in cities judged so severely? The cities in particular are today very receptive to modern art, and they accept that art enhances the lives of the inhabitants. The city-dwellers do not just accept that; they greatly subsidize art with their tax payments and foster an environment which makes it easier for artists to live, work and be creative in conditions of freedom, for all art is free. One need only recall the change that has occurred in Cologne over the last 20 years. This city, characterized by a fairly dry industriousness, apart from the cheerful Rhenish disposition, has become a pulsating community with 200 galleries, a large art market and an important art scene. Even Munich and Frankfurt envy this. The Cologne Art Fair is being copied by many. This is in stark contradiction to the harsh views on the attitude of German cities towards the arts.

(Q) What is the reason for the severity in assessing the commitment of cities to the arts? Is this not creating a contrast between diversity in art and diversity in life that does not actually exist?

(A) The doubts and severity are due to a certain frustration because "the penny has not dropped" among those responsible. There is good art and bad art, and it is completely wrong to seek to promote art on social grounds. If someone has nothing to eat, you have to help him; if somebody has just finished school and cannot get a job, it is downright dangerous not to assist him in finding work. But wanting to help an artist merely because he is an artist is a very questionable outlook. Many highly unproductive actions are attributable to this attitude.

As soon as you operate in the public domain, it is of course no longer possible today to act in the same way as in the early 19th century, when responsibility clearly lay with the patrons. Then the famous cities of art were such cities because patrons were

aware of their responsibility for promoting the arts. Dresden and Florence are cities of art, but it would surely not be appropriate to speak of Cologne as a city of art. Cologne is a city with an art business, it is appealing and efficient, but it is not a city of art. Its architectural achievements over the last 30 years can undoubtedly be described as disastrous. Those responsible in Cologne have not learned anything from their occupation with the arts. Though the criticism and severity may be somewhat exaggerated, they result from practical experience.

- (C) The most original aspect of the project proposed by Professor König is surely the conceptual element. His proposal is hardly likely to produce new insights in practice because his considerations apply to other times and to the period immediately after 1945. It is clear that not everything commissioned or sold as art is in fact art of lasting value. Evidently some time always has to elapse until there emerge from the very many items a few that actually have something to say. It is no doubt true that we in the Federal Republic of Germany find it terribly hard coping with stylistic trends, transcending them and then actually arriving at valid statements. In the past decades there was roughly every five years a different trend in the cities. For example, there was the trend of building fountains and generally an art trend. Every "proper" bank building needed a work of art, and no efforts were spared to show that a specific artist was affordable. It has to be left open whether the artist whose works are expensive at a particular moment is later in fact regarded as belonging to the avant-garde whose oeuvres remain classics. This question has probably not changed in the course of time.
- (Q) Can art really help urban areas to regain their "urban atmosphere" and hence help people to communicate with each other? One need only recall a remark by a famous art representative: "Avant-garde art is incommunicable – not by chance, but by its very nature. Its purpose is to shatter the arrogance of those who want to understand everything and thus drive them out of their

familiar world, thereby creating the space for innovation." It was argued that the conclusion to be drawn from the reluctance or inability to communicate is that the urban atmosphere should be improved by again giving art its way-of-life character.

- (C) In connection with urban atmosphere, mention should also be made of pedestrian precincts. Presumably one had expected them to become areas that provide people with an experience. In reality, many of them have to this day remained nothing but sales-promoting zones. Here a link exists with Professor König's demand, and consequently the project envisaged for Frankfurt can be regarded as a visionary idea. In the final analysis, it is a question of whether there still are and can be places for art in the cities. In earlier times the cities had a certain vividness; walking through them was an experience appealing to all senses. All of this is connected with the overriding theme of publicity of the arts, which in Cologne, for example, is praised by some and criticized by others.
- (C) More communication through the arts is indeed desirable, as was customary in the "polis". The autonomy of the arts, obtained through a hard struggle, is also of great importance, but it is no longer the be-all and end-all. What I and many others are sceptical about is that on the one hand artists want to make use of publicity, though they regard it as broken momentum, but on the other they have to try to preserve their identity at the same time.
- (C) The discussion on art in the cities stimulated by Professor König could be intensified at will. In the post-war period of reconstruction and the subsequent boom years, priority was accorded to things other than artistically pleasing design. Sins were committed then that we have to atone for today. Now we notice the shortcomings; at the construction stage we are usually blind. But now the visual arts, music and the theatre are being urged to do something beautiful because everything around is so ugly. However, we are scarcely able to do so. We can merely contribute



An example of art in public places: This sculpture, created by art professor Karl-Henning Seemann and entitled "Poverty and Wealth", stands in a pedestrian precinct in Düsseldorf.

a critical artistic approach to the discussion. We can report on what we are doing so that the public look, listen, see, experience.

- (C) There are by all means pedestrian precincts in Germany which, not least because of the works of art installed there, have influenced city life in a very positive manner. Furthermore, in many cases the weekly markets held in the precincts afford opportunities for communication, which also means the possibility of talking about art in the city. Perhaps there is in fact more potential and actual communication in cities than artists perceive when they focus exclusively on communication between the arts and the public. Art can be a very interesting incidental subject in other conversations.

Promotion of the Arts by Private Patrons and the Government

- (C) The promotion of the arts by the government, i.e. by politicians in the final analysis, depends to a decisive extent on who does the assessing. Support started at an early stage, as demanded by Dr Vogel, undoubtedly creates more latitude because it means thinking less in terms of prestige and less of an obligation to be right at all times since it makes allowance from the start for some wrong decisions being taken.
- (C) The jury system would appear to be highly questionable, even though it is probably the best means of decision-making in a democracy. It is admittedly not suitable for the definitive assessment of individual proposals for promotion. Nonetheless, politicians should delegate to experts the responsibility for choosing art, which they will naturally find easier to do if they are willing to accept that promotion at an early stage may entail wrong decisions. But it is essential that this should not lead to any diminution in the responsibility and quest for veracity and that ideas should not be promoted just for their own sake.
- (C) Why should politicians not assess art, considering that the arts are supported with tax-payers' money? Are politicians not entitled to a universal critical assessment, just as this is taken for granted in the case of artists? After all, the politician will not immediately muzzle the artist. It is, of course, true that some famous politicians expressed very foolish ideas on art – you only need to recall Bismarck's comments on Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell" or Emperor Wilhelm II's opinion of the Naturalists.
- (C) Of course, the politician should comment on the arts, just as the artist voices his views on politics. This should, however, be done with respect and tolerance for the other's profession, in other words without insisting on your own position or adopting a know-it-all attitude. For example, what would it look like if Mar-

garet Thatcher's or Helmut Kohl's position as politician were taken by Erich Fried³¹, who is very critical of politics? Conversely, it would certainly be somewhat strange if a prime minister or chancellor were to address parliament in verse.

(Q) Professor König, why do you consider private sponsors and the procedure that is customary in America to be unacceptable for Germany?

(A) I do not reject it. I merely do not want the government, i.e. public sponsors, to be released from bearing responsibility for promotion.

(Q) Why? I thought that the more private the funding is, the better it will be.

(A) You are quite right as far as private individuals are concerned. But a company that sponsors art wants to get something in return.

(Q) It seeks publicity. Is that not the government's aim, too?

(A) I am not sure. If a university is built or a theatre run, the government does not keep coming into prominence. Moreover, I am part of the state and pay taxes. For this reason I do not want public bodies to evade the duty to promote the arts.

(Q) But is it not so that many works of art of the Renaissance – you mentioned Florence – only came about on a private basis?

(A) Today the conditions are different, which is a good thing. But these conditions are not always favourable for the arts. Moreover, it is indeed very difficult to state in concrete terms the claims of the arts vis-à-vis the public sector, which operates according to administrative rules. But artists must not shun this task and must constantly make efforts to express concretely what they expect of the government.

³¹ Erich Fried. 1921–1988, Austrian writer and lyricist, emigrated to London in 1938, "100 Poems without a Country"

(Q) Why then do you reject a bridge between private and public funding?

(A) I do not reject it. I merely endeavour to find additional private sponsors. Public funding makes it possible not to become dependent on private sponsors.

(Q) Is it not possible to be more independent of private patrons than public ones?

(A) That depends on the partner. You have to try to exercise a certain amount of wiliness when obtaining funds for projects so as not to become dependent on a single sponsor.

(C) I would like to add something to the remarks on private patronage and public sponsorship. In Cologne, for example, all the museums have DM 400,000 a year at their disposal for purchasing works of art. This means that, due to this small amount of public funds, museum directors are driven into the arms of private sponsors, as in the United States. Anyone who is well informed knows that, as a legitimate reaction, groups of patrons have been formed; they support the purchase of œuvres without any intention of seeking publicity. But if these groups derive from their donations a claim to certain posts in a museum's staff and if gallery owners have the main say in the groups, museums will inevitably compile their collections in accordance with the structure of the groups. I consider this a problem and thus appeal for larger public grants. In this respect there has been an unpleasant development: the granting of funds on the basis of the number of visitors to museums. The problem connected with visiting a museum is surely not that the visitor may not like the exhibits, or even finds them annoying, but that, as a result of an ill-considered approach, too many people may be drawn into the museum and thus greatly hamper the artistic experience. Politicians ought to ponder this problem.

(C) There is surely a difference between a lasting work of art being supported with private funds and an ephemeral theatre produc-

tion being backed with public money. Especially in the theatre, the government should be the main, active sponsor because private patronage would mean the death of the theatre if it were the only source of support, as in America. For instance, the Metropolitan Opera is unable to stage the already announced production of Schoenberg's³² "Moses and Aron" because it is dependent on private sponsors and they prefer Puccini's "Tosca", even though it was last performed only three years ago. In this situation, Schoenberg hardly stands a chance. Public bodies have to assist, and fortunately they do so in Germany, thus permitting modern works to be staged as well. No doubt it will always remain an unanswered question whether more avant-garde works should be performed in the theatre or whether priority should be accorded to more established works.

- (C) In earlier centuries, private patronage undoubtedly played the decisive role. It is a good thing that today we do not have any state and private patronage of the kind which used to exist and that there is no rivalry between public and private promotion of the arts. It is sometimes problematic when a private patron donates something to the public sector that causes difficulties for the latter.
- (C) The dispute over art is evidently even fiercer than that over the theatre. This is no doubt mainly connected with the loss of a self-contained view of the world. Finding a set of coordinates for classifying modern art is probably even more difficult than for other forms of art. In the theatre, for example, it would seem easier to lay down criteria for assessing it. If I understood Professor König correctly, he feels that in the much-lauded golden Middle Ages private patronage made art possible in the first place. The role that used to be played by courts in Germany, Italy and other countries has today been assumed by the government. I believe it is right for the government to shoulder the task of promoting the

³² Arnold Schoenberg. 1874–1951. Austrian composer, established the "twelve-tone technique", "Moses and Aron" (opera in 3 acts)

arts. In the past, princely courts created entire cultural trends and a climate in which art was able to flourish. Other princes did not do so. The main difference between those princes and today's "princes", the minister-presidents, is that the latter are elected. Whether it is fortunate or unfortunate that they can be elected out of office depends on how they act.

- (C) Public funding plays a special role for the theatre since the latter offers collective art. But this means that sometimes you have to withstand public counterpressure. As an individualistic artist, painter, sculptor, author or composer, I would not like to be exposed to the pressure of regularly having to obtain money from a particular institution. However, it is true of these individualistic artists and of the theatre that there is no guarantee of success, that experiments should thus be promoted as well. That is genuine patronage. Anyone can finance success. It is important that art should also be able to develop things which some people may initially regard as leading to a dead-end. For progress in art in general, I consider it essential that faulty developments sponsored with public or private funds should be perceived and acknowledged as such.

There can be no concluding remarks on this discussion because the arts are just as open as the debate on them, because the arts, too, are or should be in a constant state of flux. Demand for discussing "art and politics" indubitably exists. More opportunities should be created for meeting this demand.

Kristin Horn

I am surprised but glad that I can sing another chanson now because I was afraid the atmosphere after the discussion might have made this undesirable. Thus I find it all the more pleasing to wish each of you

"Ein gutes Lied..."

Ich wünsche dir ein gutes Lied,
das Freunde hat und Kreise zieht
und Hoffnung gibt und Klarheit bringt
und Brücken schlägt und Angst zersingt
Denn Macht hat nur so lang mit Macht
dich ihren Zwecken angepaßt
und deine Träume umgebracht,
wie du dein eignes Lied nicht hast.

Doch wenn du hast, halt es nicht fest,
und wenn es sich nicht singen läßt,
dann schrei es, wenn du schreien kannst,
und wenn du lachst und wenn du tanzst.
Da tanz ich mit und lach dir zu,
auch wenn ich anders bin als du
und du ganz anders bist als ich,
da brauch ich dich, da brauchst du mich.

Daß Erde wieder Segen bringt
und Mensch und Tier zusammenklingt
und alles Leben leben kann
schon jetzt, und nicht erst irgendwann
die Liebe, die die Angst besiegt,
wie sich der Stein dem Grase fügt,
damit kein Lied verloren sei.
Das sing, das lach, das tanz, das schrei.

Participants

Dr Bernhard Vogel, Minister-President of Rhineland-Palatinate and President of the Bundesrat (1 Nov. 1987–31 Oct. 1988)

Dr Ulla Hahn, author ("Herz über Kopf", "Freudenfeuer", "Spielende", "Unerhörte Nähe", etc.), received the Leonce and Lena Prize, the Friedrich Hölderlin Prize and other awards, appointed "town writer of Bergen-Enkheim"

Kasper König, professor of visual arts in Cologne, organized the "Skulpturen-Projekt" in Münster with well-known artists, the "Kölner Westkunst", a new art gallery in Frankfurt/Main, etc.

Günther Beelitz, since 1986 manager of the Bayerisches Staatsschauspiel in Munich, following posts at theatres in Darmstadt and Düsseldorf

Kristin Horn, singer-songwriter